

BANGLADESH: U.S. GOVERNMENT DISASTER RELIEF SUPPORT FOLLOWING CYCLONE SIDR

**Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
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WASHINGTON, DC, NOVEMBER 19 -- The United States is responding in the aftermath of Cyclone Sidr to try to meet the immediate needs of the Bangladeshi people, calling into action a multitude of U.S. Government disaster relief agencies and departments. We extend our deepest sympathies to the people of Bangladesh following this major natural disaster, and we stand ready to assist further.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided \$100,000 immediately after the cyclone and has deployed a five-person disaster assessment team to Bangladesh to assist with the relief and recovery efforts. This team is working alongside local authorities to conduct field assessments that will identify additional needs and areas where we might be of assistance. USAID is now sending an additional \$2 million in emergency funds for water and sanitation programs and to provide shelter materials to those in need. A portion of this funding will also be provided to humanitarian organizations currently working in the affected areas.

At the request of the U.S. Embassy in Bangladesh, U.S. Pacific Command has sent a 23-man Humanitarian Assistance Survey Team of U.S. Marines to the southern coast of Bangladesh to determine how the U.S. military can best provide assistance in the area. A military medical team already in country is prepared to provide medical assistance to the injured. In addition, U.S. Navy ships, *USS Essex* and *USS Kearsarge*, have been ordered to move in the direction of Bangladesh so that U.S. military forces can be better positioned in the event that the Government of Bangladesh requests assistance. These ships, expected to arrive in 5 to 7 days, each carry 20 or more helicopters that can be used for medical evacuations and surveying affected areas. The Department of Defense will continue to assess assets which may be deployed to Bangladesh.

While the United States and other donors will continue to aid in the aftermath of Cyclone Sidr, the effects of the Cyclone were certainly lessened and many lives saved thanks to the investments the Government of Bangladesh, working with USAID, has made in disaster preparedness and mitigation.

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Note: *A Bangla translation of this article is also available at the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section, Tel: 8837150-4, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: DhakaPA@state.gov; Website: [http:// dhaka.usembassy.gov](http://dhaka.usembassy.gov)*